

## GRANDMOTHER'S BOAT

### **THE QUEEN'S PARROT & THE KING'S APE**

by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

The boat goes a-sailing.  
Grandmother's boat goes a-sailing,  
Girija's grandmother's boat goes a-sailing,  
Grand-daughter Girija's grandmother's  
    boat goes a-sailing  
On a long voyage!  
Grandmother's luggage was carefully  
    thought out,  
Every item was carefully brought out,  
And put in the boat,  
Grandmother's boat,  
Girija's grandmother's boat,  
Grand-daughter Girija's grandmother's  
    boat.

Of what did the luggage consist? I wonder!  
Could I have an idea of the list, I wonder!

A watch and a chain,  
A crutch and a cane,  
A basin, a mug,  
A broom and a jug,  
A pillow, a rug.  
A towel, a soap.  
A nail and a rope.  
A loaf of brown bread.  
A reel of white thread,  
A needle, a pin,  
A boot-polish tin.  
A berry, a plum,  
A bottle of gum,  
A biscuit, a toffee,  
A jugful of coffee.  
A ball of old string.  
A pearl earring.  
A ruby, a crystal,  
A sword and a pistol,  
A curtain, a chair,

A wolf and a bear,  
An apple, a fig,  
A cow and a pig,  
A mango, a grape,  
A turtle, an ape,  
A pencil, a pen,  
A duck and a hen,  
A brick  
And a stick  
And a pot  
And a cot.  
A parrot,  
A carrot,  
A bottle of malt.  
A bottle of salt.

One kilo of rice.  
One kilo of spice.  
One kilo of wheat.  
One kilo of meat.  
A bowl and a dish,  
A crab and a fish.  
A silver-grey shawl,  
A green parasol.  
A purse  
And a verse  
And a gong  
And a song.  
A lamp and a taper,  
A sheet of newspaper,  
A big box of hard-board,  
A small box of card-board,  
A balm for a blister,  
A baby transistor,  
A cheap magazine.  
A sewing machine,  
A bundle of lace,  
A spectacle case,  
A cask and a casket,  
A cloak and a mitten.  
And inside a basket  
A dear little kitten. . . .  
*miaaaao!*

The boat goes a-sailing.  
Grandmother's boat goes a-sailing,  
Girija's grandmother's boat goes a-sailing.  
Grand-daughter Girija's grandmother's  
boat goes a-sailing.

There is no knowing  
As to where it is going.  
As to where, as to where, as to where  
It is going. . . .

What happened then?  
Why do you ask me?  
Ask my pen. . . .

With terrible teeth and throbbing throat.  
A terrible crocodile followed the boat,  
Grandmother's boat,  
Girija's grandmother's boat.  
Grand-daughter Girija's grandmother's  
boat. . . .

And, then, with a smile  
Of cunning and guile,  
The huge crocodile  
Pulled down each particle  
Of every article,  
Pulled them all down with remarkable ease!

What did the crocodile pull down, please?

A dear little kitten  
Inside a basket.  
A cloak and a mitten,  
A cask and a casket,  
A spectacle case,  
A bundle of lace,  
A sewing machine,  
A cheap magazine,  
A baby transistor,  
A balm for a blister.  
A small box of cardboard.

A big box of hard-board.  
A sheet of newspaper,  
A lamp and a taper,  
A song  
And a gong,  
A verse  
And a purse.  
A green parasol,  
A silver-grey shawl,  
A crab and a fish,  
A bowl and a dish.  
One kilo of meat.  
One kilo of wheat,  
One kilo of spice,  
One kilo of rice.  
A bottle of salt,  
A bottle of malt,  
A cot  
And a pot  
And a stick  
And a brick.  
A carrot,  
A parrot,  
A duck and a hen,  
A pencil, a pen,  
A turtle, an ape,  
A mango, a grape,  
A cow and a pig,  
An apple, a fig,  
A wolf and a bear,  
A curtain, a chair,  
A sword and a pistol,  
A ruby, a crystal,  
A pearl earring,  
A ball of old string,  
A jugful of coffee,  
A biscuit, a toffee,  
A bottle of gum.

A berry, a plum,  
A boot-polish tin,  
A needle, a pin,  
A reel of white thread.

A loaf of brown bread,  
A nail and a rope,  
A towel, a soap,  
A pillow, a rug,  
A broom and a jug,  
A basin, a mug,  
A crutch and a cane,  
A watch and a chain.

One after another,  
One after another.  
From top and under,  
From top and under. . . .

But what was dear grandmother  
Doing, I wonder.

During the while that the horrible creature  
Of horrible feature  
Indulged in his orgy of pillage and plunder,  
What was poor grandmother doing,  
I wonder?

Grandmother's age is a hundred and four  
Her sole occupation, they say, is to snore,  
Her sleep is so deep!  
How deep is her sleep?

You could easily tell from the sound  
of her snore  
That grandmother's age is a hundred  
and four,  
Girija's grandmother's age is a hundred  
and four,  
Grand-daughter Girija's grandmother's age  
is a hundred and four. . . .  
*And the crocodile knew it!*

end